DEMAND VIII—ELECTRICITY AND TELEPHONE—Rs.55,99,914.—Discussion—(*contd.*)

MR. M. SIVATHANU PILLAI (*Thovala* cum *Agastisvaram*): Sir, yesterday I was referring to the delay in the matter of transmitting trunk calls from station to station and it was also envisaged in explanation of the delay that it might be caused by some subordinates who are in charge of these things viz., between certain stations there is only one way of communication for trunk calls and there will be heavy traffic on the line and that will naturally lead to inevitable delay. This kind of delay can be accepted. But the delays caused on account of negligence or indifference of the subordinates in the matter, cannot be accepted. In the first place in the matter of booking and in the matter of receiving a call in public Call Offices considerable delay is being caused. I may recall in this connection a personal experience of mine. In connection with a certain incident I had to book a call from Nagercoil to Trivandrum. I had to wait for a long time to book that call to Trivandrum.

PRESIDENT: It may be of interest to the honourable member to know that for a trunk call to His Excellency the Viceroy it took six hours.

MR. M. SIVATHANU PILLAI: From the several speeches I understand that the complaints of delay in call to be general. There is delay as a rule on all stations in Travancore. On one occasion, finding my call to Trivandrum not even booked for a considerable time and noting the attenders in the Trivandrum Exchange are not alert but careless and indifferent, I complained atonce by securing an express Call to the Executive Engineer about the negligence of the attender there in Trivandrum. He told me that he will enquire into the matter and after some time he told me that the delay had been enquired into, that the subordinate was warned and that in future, delays will not be caused. I think it is possible to avoid such delays which we experience at the hands of the subordinates. Secondly there is one inconvenience to which I would like to invite your attention, Sir. At least in these important Exchange Stations seats must be provided for, accommodating the callers who go to book calls. There is no sitting convenience. The department causes delay and asks us to stand and keep standing throughout the long delay. Hence necessary arrangement for seating accommodation may be made as early as practicable. I submit that this aspect also may be borne in mind by the Government.

MR. J. W. TOLSON (*Travancore Planters*): Sir, I may inform the House that yesterday when I phoned to Alleppey it took me very nearly 5 hours to get the other end. I have several times booked calls which could not go through. In another case from Trivandrum to Cape I had to book a call. It took me several hours to get through. I bring this to the notice of the Government and to the head of the department in particular.

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MR. DOMINIC JOSEPH (*Vaikom* cum *Kottayam*): The telephone system is not a commercial service but it is a public utility service. That more and more people are taking advantage of the service will be seen from the fact that the net revenue from Telephone has nearly doubled in the current year from what it was in 1117. Serious inconvenience is felt owing to the delay in the booking of calls and the transmission of messages. I make mention of these facts to support the suggestion made by Mr. Sivathanu Pillai that, at least seating accommodation may be provided for the people who go to the Public Telephone Call Office, and Telephone Exchanges. In the Kottayam Exchange we can find for several hours of the day many people waiting in that office. There is absolutely no accommodation provided. Where there are separate public offices.—I mean where these may not be connected with the Anchel Office where the work is very busy and where people wait for hours and hours together. I suggest that the ordinary amenities suggested may be provided.

PRESIDENT: I may say this: probably honourable members are not fully aware how much breakdown there is both in the Postal, Telegraphic and Telephonic Services on account of military demands. The general rule in force is that no civil demands are given priority over military demands excepting in the case of State calls or calls on behalf of what may be called the Urgent Services. I have found great difficulty in trying to get Delhi from Madras or *vice versa*. Unless you tell the Telephone Operators that you have to put through an urgent call to some person or other on public business there is always difficulty. I have no doubt the Electrical Engineer will tell you how much of that applies here. But it must be borne in mind that the military calls which obtain priority even in this State are not small.

MR. J. E. A. PERIERA (*Commerce and Industry, South*): I can understand that. I am making a liberal allowance for that. My complaint is that they do not answer the calls at all. Just as Mr. Tolson said, we have to ring several times before they answer a call. I think the system that is prevailing in Trivandrum is also at fault. The whole trouble is that the Operator does not know which is which, and we hear a number of talks.

PRESIDENT: You get the advantage of listening to a number of conversations.

MR. J. E. A. PERIERA: But the time spent must be measured in terms of money.

PRESIDENT: I can well imagine that in the case of the speaker.

MR. J. E. A. PERIERA: I shall give an instance. In Quilon when I took the Receiver I told the Operator the number I wanted. Then after a time he called me again and asked what number I wanted. He had forgotten the number. This is decidedly worse in the town of Trivandrum. While in Trivandrum, one day I happened to ring from my office to the Chief Secretary's Office. Still I could not get him for a long time.

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PRESIDENT: I am glad that no distinction was made between person and person. (*Laughter*).

MR. J. E. A. PERIERA: What I am trying to point out is that there is very great delay due to the inefficiency or inadequacy of the staff. The argument that there are plenty of calls does not at all apply to these instances. In Quilon we are helpless. It is the semi-automatic system. We lift the Receiver and just hold on until he connects us. We are absolutely helpless. I shall give a concrete example of the delay there. There is a semi-automatic exchange at Chavara. I booked a call to my factory there at 10 o' clock and until 3 o' clock there was no reply at all. I brought this to the notice of the Electrical Engineer and he said that he will enquire into it. I appeal to Government to ask the Chief Engineer to do something immediately.

MR. M. L. JANARDHANA PILLAI (*Nominated*): Sir, since honourable members have all touched on the various aspects of the delay, I want to bring to the notice of Government one particular point. In regard to messages booked from Alleppey to Trivandrum they have to pass *via* Mavelikara. In spite of that difficulty, when private calls are booked these are stopped for the sake of conversations by some departmental officers who want to use the Telephone. Then the Booking Clerk says that he cannot give the connection for some time because some big officer wants to use the phone. The Departmental officers have no time limit either, because they can go on talking as long as they like. I just want to impress upon Government the necessity of keeping the commercial telephone service separate from the official telephone service. If the officials want it, let them have a separate telephone line. Let the present line be given over fully for the public.

MR. S. CHATTANATHA KARAYALAR (*Pathanapuram* cum *Shencotta*): Sir, I wish to speak a few words in regard to the delays in getting trunk calls. I have to make a suggestion in this connection as the result of my own experience. It appears that trunk calls are not registered by the Operators. I may state that a few days ago I booked a call to Quilon in the morning and waited for four hours. When I tried to find out from the Exchange the cause of the delay, I learnt that the call had not been registered. Then I asked the operator to register it. After that I got the connection in an hour. I suggest that the calls may be registered in the order in which they are booked, so that delays in putting through calls may be reduced to some extent at least.

MR. P. KUNJUKRISHNAN: Sir, in supporting the motion I endorse the views of the learned mover. So far as the delay is concerned I have also the same experience at Quilon. There is too much delay. There is heavy demand at the Telephone Call Office at Quilon so much so there is great delay. I have seen several people waiting at the same time outside the call office, without any seating accomadation I may submit that it may be unavoidable in certain circumstances.

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[Mr. P. Kunjukrishnan.]

The delay may be unavovidable, but it is necessary that seating accomadation is provided. When several people flock together they have to keep standing outside.

PRESIDENT: I may at once say that arrangements will be made for seating accommodation.

MR. P. KUNJUKRISHNAN: With these words, I support the motion.

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON (*Electrical Engineer to Government*): Sir, I entirely agree with most of the observations made by the members regarding the delays that are being experienced in the transmission of telephone messages. My only explanation is that such delays are inevitable in the present circumstances. The number of external trunk calls in 1116 was 15,003, in 1117 the number increased to 35,000 and from the statistics available for 1118, so far the number of calls handed this year will be well over 65,000. The reasons for the increase in the calls are manifold. One is due to the natural expansion of the telephone system. When it was started in 1115 there were only 17 exchanges and now we have 34. The next reason is the number of subscribers which was 514 in 1116, has now rearched 1,000. In addition to the normal expansion of the telephone system due to these causes, there has been a phenomenal increase in the volume of internal calls also due to the present situation, *viz.*, the exigencies of the administration, military demands and business interests on account of the large volume of the commercial business in connection with the war effort. So much so, many of the sections in our telephone system are now working to saturation point.

The only way to remedy this defect would appear to be to open up new channels of communication which means that where there is one line only at present we have to provide a duplicate circuit. This, I may say, is very difficult at present, as copper conductors and equipments are scarce and impossible to get. The orders placed for these in 1116 are still pending execution. We were told recently that the application for the import of copper conductors will not be supported.

A reference to the Map in the Telephone Directory would show that one of the limitations to our system is the bottle-neck at Mavelikara, through which all the calls that come into or emanate from the State have to pass. The result is that a connection from Kottayam to Alleppey may take a long time especially if that section is already attending to such a trunk call. On account of the present abnormal conditions it has been decided that the first priority should be given to military calls. Next comes calls due to the exigencies of administration. Third is the express call, and then the preference calls. Only after these will ordinary calls be booked. Very often military calls and administrative calls have very large demands on the telephone system. After the opening of the Watch Station at Muttom the communication between Nagercoil and Trivandrum is held up to give proiority to the military. Government are now in negotiation with the Post and Telegraphic department to open another trunk

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outlet between Alwaye and Eranakulam so that all the external calls North of Kottayam may be handed by that route as an alternative. The Department has also under consideration the running of a duplicate line from Mavelikara to Quilon. And with the inauguration of the power line between Papanasam and Kundara, we are hoping that there will be telephonic communications between Kundara and Shencottah, so that there will be a direct connection to Tinnevelly from Quilon which will be an alternative trunk outlet besides the one to Cochin now existing. It is hoped that these arrangements will relieve the congestion to a great extent.

So far as delays in the local Exchange at Trivandrum are concerned, I may state that these are inevitable in a system where the exchange has to handle 500 subscribers on the Magneto System. The number of calls put through is sometimes 5,000 daily. One can understand that even with all the best efforts, congestion cannot be avoided. To overcome some of these difficulties provision has been made in the next year's budget, as honourable members are no doubt aware, for increasing the number of operators in all the important exchanges and to reduce the number of hours of work for each operator and thus to reduce their strain and prevent deterioration in the quality of their services. It is also proposed to appoint a senior operator to supervise the work of these ordinary operators in all the important exchanges and transit stations. A register of all calls is always kept and it is very easy to check up whether the calls emanating from a particular station have passed through the various intermediate stages, because in our trunk system if a call is put through at Trivandrum say to Kottayam it has to pass through Quilon, Mavelikara and then to Kottayam. A record of all these is invariably entered in the register, so that if any subscriber does not get a call through, he has only to inform the controlling officer about the time and date at which the call was put through and it is very easy to check up where the default is. I cannot say that in all cases the operators are at fault, because they are working on a very antiquated system which cannot cope up with the enormous volume of traffic which they have to handle. We are now passing through abnormal times and in order to cope with the abnormal volume of traffic, it is necessary to duplicate our lines and instal additional equipments. Unfortunately these cannot be had at present. Our system was designed and maintained for normal traffic conditions. In addition to the normal increase in the number of calls, there are military demands and administration demands which have imposed additional strain on the operators. Expenditure of more money for the duplication of lines will not be justified now, but if it is found, when conditions become normal that the existing system is not capable of handling the volume of communication satisfactorily, then such improvements will have to be made; and a change from the existing manual system to the auto system at least in the major exchanges will be inevitable. Proposals have always been made for introducing an automatic system in Trivandrum and Government have ordered that the work may be taken up after the war when equipments become available.

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[Mr. K. P. P. Menon.]

We are working under very serious handicaps. But the present proposal for the appointment of supervising agencies at important exchanges and transit stations for checking up the work of the ordinary operators especially during rush hours, will, I expect, minimise considerably the present difficulties. In the beginning, when the public call offices were opened, there was no rush of subscribers to those stations and there was no delay in putting through the calls. So no seating arrangements were provided at these offices. Now that real difficulties have arisen, arrangements will have to be made to overcome those difficulties.

The fact that although we have to maintain over 700 miles of trunk lines and 300 miles of loop lines the number of cases of delay in services due to interruption of lines has been very small, proves that the maintenance has been kept at a very high standard. But I am quite prepared to concede that there is what I may call the "human element" in the work of the operators and very often, without any deliberate intention, they are likely to be slack especially towards the end of the shifts presumably due to physical fatigue. To avoid this, their hours of shift will have to be reduced and more operators employed.

PRESIDENT: Is there any possible method by which a man who wants to put through a call has not got to hear the mutual reproaches of those in the intermediate stations.

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON: This is sometimes unavoidable, because, if a call is put through, the exchange operator has to respond to that call, and has also to get the connection asked for, and while this is being done the party that is calling is likely to hear the conversation between the operators.

PRESIDENT: I have heard very animated conversations between the operators at Mavelikara whenever I wanted to put a call through to Delhi.

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON: When a call is booked through from here to Delhi, we have to establish contact with Alleppey first.

PRESIDENT: Is it possible to shut me off for some time and say that 'after we have finished this call, we will put you through? Don't you think it would be better? At present, some times the operator says 'Well, I will get you the connection to Delhi, and then let you know.' We wait for the call, and if he does not put you through soon, then all the time you will be hearing these episodes. That has become a uniform experience.

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON: That is a case of faulty operation. All that the operator is expected to do is to establish a contact between our exchange and the P. T. Exchange at Alleppey and convey a message to the calling party whether the connection is established or not.

PRESIDENT: The system should be that when a man requires to be put through, he should be told that as soon as the connection is secured he would be informed.

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RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON : The arrangement is that the Trivandrum man will inform the next transit station to get Delhi ready, and pass the information received from there to Trivandrum, before the Trivandrum subscriber speaks.

There is another reason for delays in some cases which may be brought to the notice of the honourable members. Very often a personal call is booked through from a public office saying that so-and-so in Trivandrum is wanted. The line is built up, say, from Chengannur to Trivandrum and the operator at Trivandrum will have to hunt up for that man. If the called party is an officer, say like myself, he will be either in his bungalow, or in his office or out of station on inspection. These preliminaries take some time, and the operetor, instead of giving back the information that so-and-so is not available, sometimes goes out of his way to find out the particular individual.

PRESIDENT : The simple thing would be to say that it will take some time to get the man in the line.

MR. M. R. NARAYANA PILLAI : May I know whether it would not be possible to advertise the system of the phonocom more thoroughly ?

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON : People are now using the phonocom system extensively for transmitting messages.

In conclusion I may state that our magneto system has outgrown itself, and if we have to keep pace with the growing demands, we have to remove the bottle-necks. We have to instal repeaters at Mavelikara and duplicate a line from here to Quilon. I expect I shall be able to do these this year and thus relieve the congestion in that section to a large extent.

With regard to the delays in the service between Nagercoil and Trivandrum, we are helpless at present because there are several military calls that pass through every day, and very often all communications have to be cleared off for that purpose.

MR. M. SIVATHANU PILLAI : Can it not be arranged at least to inform us that it is not possible to put through our call for some time and so ask us to go away ?

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON : The difficulty is that we do not often know when the military will finish their call and we will be able to get a connection to others only after them. For example, they might finish in 15 minutes, on the other hand, they might engage the line for one full hour.

In regard to what Mr. Janardhanan Pillai pointed out, I may correct him and state that the departmental officers are not expected to use the public service line at all. They are expected to use only the Pallivasal trunk, and as it is now arranged that system is also made available for the use of the public. Officers of the Electrical Department are subject to the same restrictions in the use of the telephone system as officers of other departments,

PRESIDENT : Is it not also a fact that, apart from members of your department, all other officers who put calls through have to make book adjustments and their departments have to pay for the calls ?

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RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON: Yes, Sir. Every one using the phone has to pay the usual charges. Instead of the departmental officers monopolising the telephone system as stated by Mr. Janadhanan Pillai, I am on the other hand arranging for the Pallivasal line also for the use of the public to reduce the congestion to some extent. With regard to Mr. Tolson's remarks, I wish he would inform the particulars of the time and date of occurrence so that I may make enquiries. As I have said before a call from Kottayam to Alleppey has to pass through that bottle neck at Mavelikara and very likely military calls may intervene and then a line clear will have to be made. In such circumstances a call may reach Alleppey only after five hours.

To avoid the congestion that is being experienced now, we have introduced a system whereby concession rates are allowed if the calls are to be put through at particular hours of the day or evening so that such calls may emanate when the system is not generally busy. But even this does not sometimes make any material reduction in the congestion. On a particular day the peak level may be between 2-30 and 6-30, but this may change to between 10 and 12 in the morning or 5 and 7 in the evening. The only obvious method to solve our difficulties in this direction is the introduction of the Carrier system, a system by which we can pass several messages simultaneously through the same conductor. This has been recently introduced in British India, but the question of our adopting the same system has to be considered after normal conditions are restored and after we have satisfied as to whether our traffic will remain at its present level or whether it is likely to go down.

MR. PULIYOOR T. P. VELAYUDHAN PILLAI: The honourable member referred to express calls and preference calls. Will he be pleased to explain what is meant by preference calls and the difference between these two calls?

RAJYASEVAPRAVINA K. P. PADMANABHA MENON: They are all clearly explained in the telephone rules published in the Government Gazette sometime ago.

MR. PULIYOOR T. P. VELAYUDHAN PILLAI: Sir, I do not press the motion.

The motion was, by leave, withdrawn.

The question that Government be granted a sum Rs. 55,99,914, under Demand VIII—Electricity and Telephone, was put to vote and carried.

DEMAND No. IX—STATE TRANSPORT—Rs. 32,21,863.

MR. E. G. SALTER (*Director of Transport*): Sir, I rise to move that Government be granted a sum of Rs. 32,21,863 under Demand IX—State Transport.

Motion No. III.

MR. N. NARAYANA KURUP: Sir, I move that Rs. 10 may be reduced from the allotment of Rs. 60,001 for Administration, Management and Control to discuss the defects in the administration and control.

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